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ABSTRACT

There is no question that the many journals published here and around the world provide a common ground for scholars to evaluate theories or findings proposed by their peers. In the field of mass communication, the visual component should be included as a useful tool in discussing relevant issues of the day; further, the editing and preparation of visual tools should be recognized as a form of scholarly research. Effective invited presentations given at regional and national conventions could consist of short papers accompanied by edited videotapes. In this way, video editing expertise can enhance presentations. The use of videotape as a teaching and research tool is growing. For example, academics may use the Purdue University archives for obtaining copies of programs that have appeared on C-SPAN. It is important to note, however, that ownership strings are attached to video technology. Most programs are copyrighted. (TB)

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"Expanding the Definition of Scholarly Research."

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My institution receives a number of scholarly publications each month in its departments and library. Of course, these findings of various research efforts are only a fraction of what is published in the United States each year. There has been occasional criticism from both inside and outside academic circles that some of what is labeled "scholarly research" in fact is limited in scope and not generalizable to the outside world.

I have pondered this criticism in two areas. First, do we as academicians spend too much time carving our individual research niches in areas which are largely irrelevant? I believe the answer to that question is a definitive no. Knowledge gained from any academic pursuit can only make scholars more proficient. Second, can the definition of scholarly research be expanded to take into account emerging technologies that are changing the way we as academicians think and study? Absolutely. So how can we become better researchers and teachers as a result of these changes?

There is no question that the many journals published here and around the world provide a common ground for scholars to evaluate theories or findings proposed by their peers. In my field of mass communication, the visual component must be included as a useful tool in discussing relevant issues of the day. Most of the invited presentations I give at regional and national conventions of professional associations consist of short papers accompanied by edited videotapes. In this way, I can both use my videotape

editing expertise in addition to giving colleagues broader visual perspectives on issues I am evaluating.

The use of videotape as a teaching and research tool is growing. For example, academicians may use the Purdue University Public Affairs Video Archives for obtaining copies of programs recorded from the C-SPAN networks. The spectrum of available programs from networks, cable and home video provides a treasure trove of potential materials for research purposes. Once a scholar feels comfortable with recording and editing such programs, a new weapon has been added to her or her personal research arsenal. It is only a matter of time before technologies such as CD-ROM and multimedia regularly take their places at the research table for convention presentations as well.

It is important to note that ownership strings are attached to video technology. Most programs we are dealing with are copyrighted material. This means they can be recorded and analyzed for educational purposes under a Supreme Court "fair use" doctrine established in 1976. Some material videotaped by an academician or institutional media center may be shown without charge twice in an educational setting before being destroyed within 90 days of its original recording.

If a scholar has any questions regarding classroom or scholarly usage of a program, he or she should talk to the owner of the copyright before videotaping or showing anything in a public

setting. Some television programs or videos, like school filmstrips before them, require a fee before being shown. If unsure about these provisions, it is in the best interest of the academician to consult with experts immediately.

There are exceptions to video copyright provisions. CNN allows public airings without compensation of its Newsroom program, which is produced for elementary and high school student audiences. The C-SPAN video and audio networks have a liberal copyright policy. Any program C-SPAN produces in-house may be shown or edited for educational purposes and may be kept indefinitely. In fact, any program which is labeled "Cable in the Classroom" may be used without compensation before being destroyed after 90 days.

An expert in the area of video copyright law is Bruce Collins, C-SPAN legal counsel and program host. At a 1993 C-SPAN in the Classroom Seminar for Professors (Summer Session), he said programs his networks air with permission from other cable or broadcast television affiliates cannot be used without permission of the copyright holder for scholarly research purposes. C-SPAN obtains the right to show these programs twice, but is not the owner of the product.

An important distinction here is that C-SPAN, as a non-profit organization, can encourage open recording and editing of its programs without fear of losing money. Commercial video producers

and distributors do not enjoy this luxury. It is essential that scholars not abuse the process when recording television programs off-air or evaluating home video programs for research efforts.

I have incorporated my knowledge of advanced videotape editing techniques with scholarly analyses of various mass communication issues and personalities in my academic career. This skill allows me to place audio evaluations of subjects on videotapes without frequent starting and stopping of video cassette recorders. Audiences can follow my scripted voiceovers as they are included in distributed papers. This approach serves as an excellent starting point for panel and audience discussions of the subject matter.

Professors should consider this type of scholarly research for inclusion on their annual summaries of professional performance. I submit edited videotapes each year to administrative superiors in addition to formal written documents, video reviews and other published materials. The level of sophistication in editing and analyzing video is a significant part of the mass communication research discipline, and deserves a place in such annual reviews. Invited professional presentations which include these ideas can only be enhanced as a result.

Such invited media programs take tens of hours to record, write, edit and produce. It is similar to a delivering a paper except in the respect that the visual element is a prime component of the storytelling process. Voiceovers should set up certain

video clips instead of being redundant and say exactly what is to be seen. Sometimes, depending upon the subject, no voiceovers may be necessary. However, nothing visually can be taken out of context at the expense of furthering a script written by an academician. Ideally, a well-produced media program which accompanies a paper will stand on its own without a great deal of explanation before its viewing.

Segments of what I have produced recently pass this self-imposed litmus test. I first used the video editing technique at the 1991 Speech Communication Association National Convention in Atlanta, Georgia for the topic, "Infomercials: The Advertising Format Viewers Love to Hate." To give the audience an overview of the topic, I edited three minutes of infomercial clips together without commentary. Some of the products shown were so ridiculous that critical remarks on my part were unnecessary.

I edited and narrated a number of short papers and media programs in the 1992-93 academic year which received positive critical feedback from professional audiences. "The Importance of Minority Role Models in a Higher Education Mass Communication Curriculum" was shown at the 1993 National Association for African-American Studies Conference in Petersburg, Virginia. "Ross Perot: Populist Prophet or Media-Created Megalomaniac?" was presented at the 1993 Far West Popular Culture Association/Far West American Culture Association Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada. A third media

program, "Sleeping with the Enemy: Victimization and Redemption," was presented at the 1992 Speech Communication Association Convention in Chicago, Illinois.

There is an increased level of sophistication in the editing and blending of video and audio with each production. As I became more comfortable with working on a consistent formula for these different video sources, my storytelling proficiency rose. I have produced other media programs since, but these are representative of the craft I like to exhibit.

I am not the type of scholar who writes long papers. I prefer to use my video expertise for such analytical pursuits as the edited media programs discussed here. All academicians should consider such video research techniques, as they can only enhance their own, peer and student comprehension of any number of subjects. Creativity is the key to academic research success in these scholarly endeavors.